

**Signal Cost and Value Alignment in Organizational Sustainability Messaging to New Hires**

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## Introduction

As companies continue to integrate sustainable initiatives as a strategic focus, their communications to new hires must adapt accordingly. Orientation programs represent an opportunity to inform new hires about the company's sustainability values, but factors influencing the impact of sustainability messaging on new-hire perceptions remain unexplored. It is important for organizations to send signals to their new hires which are perceived as credible, meaningful, and genuine. However, the framing of sustainability orientation messages may combine with new-hire individual differences to influence these perceptions. We draw from signaling theory and value congruence research in HR to consider the potential impact of organizational sustainability messaging content and emphasis in the orientation context on organizationally pertinent new hire attitudes and perceptions. Signaling theory, in this case, applies to how costly of a signal the organization sends to their incoming employees. Costly signals shown to new employees within the orientation process demonstrates credibility in the organization's sustainable initiatives.

## Methodology

We conducted an experimental vignette study in which we manipulated signal costliness and intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation in the administration of a hypothetical new employee orientation presentation, creating a 2x2 factorial design. Surveys were used for manipulation checks and to capture all other variables. The experimental vignettes were developed with an eye toward both construct capture and context richness, based on guidelines and recent uses of vignette methodology in personnel research. Using Mturk, we obtained responses from a heterogeneous sample of working adults ( $n = 489$ ). These responses were evenly distributed among the 4 conditions.

### Expected Findings and Analyses

We will examine main effects and interaction effects of our independent variables on outcomes such as perceived credibility, perceived organizational sustainability, and intent to engage with organizational sustainability initiatives. In addition, we will perform moderation analyses to assess the potential influence of individual differences on those effects. From this experiment, we expect to find that costly signals will illustrate higher credibility. Additionally, we expect to find intrinsically motivated messaging and extrinsically motivated messaging to resonate more strongly with individuals that are intrinsically motivated and individuals that are extrinsically motivated, respectively.